

Public Hearing – February 25, 2022
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Katie S. Dykes

House Bill No. 5139 - An Act Concerning Extended Producer Responsibility for Tires

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding **House Bill 5139 - An Act Establishing a Tire Stewardship Program**. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) welcomes the opportunity to offer the following testimony.

DEEP **supports** this bill as an effective way to increase the recovery of discarded tires and create jobs while virtually eliminating the illegal dumping of tires. This bill would create an extended producer responsibility program for the management of discarded tires in Connecticut. Under this bill, the tire industry would assume responsibility for managing their product by submitting a plan to the Department. This plan would outline the process for recovering discarded tires as well as the end markets.

DEEP recognizes extended producer responsibility (EPR) programs as an important strategy for managing our state's solid waste going forward. The State's Comprehensive Materials Management Strategy (CMMS)¹ identifies product stewardship solutions as an effective tool to help meet the state's diversion goals. Product stewardship programs acknowledge that consumers, government and manufacturers all play an important role in managing products at the end of their useful life. Our experience with the State's very successful e-waste, mattress and paint stewardship programs has affirmed that EPR is an important tool and strategy in modern materials management.

Illegal tire dumping has been a persistent problem in Connecticut. In 2021, the City of Waterbury paid \$27,000 to dispose of 142 tons of tires, many of which were illegally dumped. Tires are dumped in abandoned buildings in the cities, in our watersheds, private property and even off Interstate 95 in Westport. In September 2016, Hartford Police made an arrest for a commercial truckload of tires from a used auto dealership being illegally dumped in the middle of the night on property owned by the Hartford Housing Authority, a case that remains under active enforcement by both the City of Hartford and DEEP. The Connecticut River Watershed Council reported retrieving 464 tires illegally dumped in the Connecticut area of the watershed on their cleanup day in 2013. Unscrupulous transporters will accept tires from unknowing generators at below market rates, cull out the tires that have resale value, and illegally dump the rest. Illegally dumped tires provide an ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes, present a fire hazard, and degrade the quality of life for citizens bearing the brunt of these hazards and blight.

Effective product stewardship programs limit the role of government. This bill as proposed does not ask DEEP to manage any funds associated with this program, and we strongly support this concept. State-run programs across the country that impose a tire tax and assign the responsibility of managing discarded tires to the state have not stopped or even lessened illegal dumping.

¹ <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Waste-Management-and-Disposal/Solid-Waste-Management-Plan/Comprehensive-Materials-Management-Strategy>

In summary, DEEP supports House Bill No. 5139 as an effective way to increase the recovery of discarded tires, create jobs, and eliminate illegal dumping. In 2015, DEEP convened a national dialogue of interested stakeholders to further the discussion on the challenge of managing scrap tires and is willing to work further with municipalities and industry to develop a plan for the implementation of this program, and help ensure that the program is run efficiently and with a limited government role.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the testimony on this proposal. If you should require any additional information, please contact the Department's legislative liaison, Harrison Nantz at Harrison.Nantz@ct.gov.